For example, dwarf wheats and rices were introduced in mid-sixties from CIMMYT, Medico and IRRI, Philippines, respectively. Germplasm of potato, sunflower, soyabean, vegetables, oilpalm is being introduced. Our scientists have the opportunities to interact with forein scientists through 25 protocols signed by the Department of Agricultural Research and Education with other countries and International Organisations.

Modifications in Crop Insurance Scheme

351. SHRI D. B. CHANDRE GOWDA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether due to recent floods in several parts of country, Government propose to modify Crop Insurance Scheme;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the farmers have been badly affected due to floods; and

(d) if so, what steps Government propose to take to give maximum benefit to the farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATION IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHYAM LAL YADAV): (a) No. Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of answer at (a) above.

(c) The farmers in some States have been affected due to recent floods.

(d) The steps Government propose to take to give maximum benefit to the farmers include the following:—

(i) Agricultural inputs subsidy at the rate of Rs. 200/- per ha. to small and marginal farmers whose crops have been damaged more than 50 per cent.

(ii) assistance for de-silting to small and marginal farmers at the rate of 25 per cent and 33-1/3 per cent respectively on the basis of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) norms subject to a ceiling; and

(iii) conversion of short-term loans into medium term loans.

Import of wheat

352. SHRI D. B. CHANDRE GOWDA: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to import rice and wheat from the Thailand;

(b) if so, whether the production of rice and wheat in the country is inadequate to meet its demand; and

(c) the purpose of importing rice and wheat from Thailand?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI D. L. BAITHA): (a) to (c) The Government has contracted for import of 6.5 lakh tonnes of rice from Thailand during the current year to replenish the buffer stocks which underwent considerable drawdown due to drought last year and increased pressure on the public distribution system.

Financial assistance to Kerala for loss of coconut due to pest

353. SHRI ARANGIL SREEDHARAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any representation from the Government of Kerala for financial assistance to compensate the revages caused to coconut trees due to pest; and

(b) if so, what steps Government have taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATION IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHYAM LAL YADAV): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Dumping of seeds by multinational Corporations under new seeds import policy

354. SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have recently given a Carteblanche to multinational Corporations to dump their seeds without necessary quarantine facilities and seeds of a possible biological nightmare in the new seed import policy;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) how far it is likely to affect the food production in the country; and

(d) whether Government propose to reverse its decision; and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATION IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHYAM LAL YADAV): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Increase in the Import Duty on Newsprint

355. SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have taken a decision to increase import duty on newsprint to 40 per cent in the near future;

(b) if so, the reasons thereof;

(c) whether the increase of import duty on newsprint would be disastrous consequences for the press and further decline in the growth of circulation of newspapers in the country; and

(d) whether Government propose to withdraw the proposed duty to save the newspapers; and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT): (a) No Sir.

(b) to (d) *Do not arise.*

Permission for skyscrappers in Delhi

356. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Will the Minister of URBAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether any decision has been taken to allow skyscrappers in Delhi in violation of the Master Plan;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are aware that there has been a strong resentment against this policy;

(d) if so, whether some changes are going to be made in the matter; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI DALBIR SINGH): (a) to (e) Guidelines about regulating high rise construction in Delhi have been recently issued by the Government after considering various points of view. Concerned local bodies have advised to incorporate these guidelines in their bye-laws and regulations after completing the prescribed legal formalities which include the issue of public notices inviting suggestions and objections